

## ENDING THE SEASON PROPERLY...

By Kenneth Lundgren

Cyclo-cross aside, autumn is a time most riders can make mistakes with their training. In my opinion, winter is the most critical training period of the year, and if you don't train properly through the autumn, then you will not be able to get the job done during the winter months...

And by training, sometimes that means NOT training.

After a year of hard racing and training, taking a true break, both physically but perhaps even more importantly mentally, is a necessity. To be honest, a rider needs some serious down-time after an arduous season of training, racing, planning, traveling, stressing... I would recommend 1-3 weeks of absolute NOTHING.

You should. You deserve it ☺.

I will even go so far to say (gasp) that an athlete should take a full break during the middle of the season. Hard to do, but if it can be accomplished, the rider is much better prepared to have a strong finish to the season. Remember, the smartest athlete, not necessarily the strongest, wins the biggest cycling events of the year...

After your planned vacation, where the rider should violate every law of his/her training diet, spend more time with the family, stay up later, really just get the mind off the bike and do other activities he/she can't when training, then training should resume. But what I mean by training is a far different cry than what most cyclists are used to: low-intensity, low-volume workouts, unplanned and unstructured. THIS is the time to begin cross-training, and by cross-training (or riding very easily) the athlete is preparing his/her body for the training that's going to follow...

Now, some riders just cannot stop training, and if you are one of these riders, then you NEED to drastically cut back on training intensity and volume. If your energy level at the end of the year is low, well now's the time to recharge that body and get prepared for the next year...

So going out and hammering that local group ride is doing you no favors – all the fast guys are home anyway, sleeping in! There is no need to go out and show off and beat on riders who (1) don't race and (2) don't care. Trust me on this: the time away from the bike WILL help during the next season!

Joe Friel likes to call emphasize “aerobic endurance” during this time. I recommend avoiding the bike and accomplishing some fun cross-training: running, hiking, climbing, yoga, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, swimming, Rollerblading... Go out and have fun and enjoy these different movements...

As we start “working out” again, then we can also introduce weights into the program, something the athlete should be yearning for. Weights are a crucial addition because the gym workouts will help strengthen the muscles, ligaments, and tendons required for a strenuous season of peak training.

A typical Elite Endurance athlete will run through a full 20-week periodized weightlifting plan, depending on his/her goals and what type of rider he/she is... The cross-training is excellent because the athlete is building and using muscles rarely used in cycling. On a bike, there is zero lateral movement and cyclists tend to develop muscle imbalances. The cyclist becomes so specialized in the pedaling motion that, more often than not, after his/her first jog, they are VERY sore the next day... And now that the rider is using and strengthening new muscles, they are better preparing themselves for the gym...

In a typical Elite Endurance plan, at the end of the year the athlete has two weeks of free training. Want to hammer some group rides, do some endurance rides, some early-morning hammerfests? Go ahead. But after, that break must occur.

When the riders are rested, happy, and fat, then we can resume with some mellow cross-training, and after a few weeks can begin weight training. From there it's three weeks of Transition training, where we focus on cadence work and pedaling efficiency, then move to a two-week block of Preparation training, where the rider sprinkles in some sprint work while beginning to do some longer, aerobic rides...

After this proper build-up, as the athlete continues to progress through the periodized weight program, he/she is then ready for true Foundation training.

If you don't end the season properly, you won't be able to start it properly.

For a very-fit athlete, or for someone who yearns for fitness and health, taking breaks during the season can be difficult, but they are critical to long-term cycling success. You need to be 100% ready for the next year, and for the athletes with whom I work, I ensure they are.

Thanks for reading.

Kenneth Lundgren

[Coach@EliteEndurance.com](mailto:Coach@EliteEndurance.com)  
[www.EliteEndurance.com](http://www.EliteEndurance.com)